

Gloria Jordan, Alexandra Lofton, Natalie Ruff, Jessie Sadlowsky, Ashley Tabor, Danielle Valentino, and Andrea Wain, Mark Valentino, Manager, Gary Wain, Coach, Mark Ruff, Coach, David Phillips, Coach.

I wish the Altamonte Springs Patriots continued academic and athletic success.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GREEN of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINOJOSA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EMANUEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EMANUEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HOLT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

QUESTIONS REGARDING VESTS FOR THE TROOPS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STRICKLAND) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STRICKLAND. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about something that has been in the news lately. I first became aware of this problem in May when I received a letter from a young soldier in Baghdad, one of my constituents, a young man who attended West Point, a young man who loves the military and loves being in the Army. He wrote me a letter and he said, Congressman, I am so proud to be in the Army. And then later on in his letter, he said, I'm angry because there are two kinds of protective vests that are being issued over here. One of the vests is capable of stopping fragments. The other vest is capable of stopping bullets. I'm wondering why my men do not have access to the best vests, those that can stop bullets. It is called the Interceptor vest. It is made of Kevlar. It has areas where ceramic inserts can be placed. And these Interceptor vests have been credited with saving nearly 30 lives in Afghanistan. Yet, Madam Speaker, it is almost beyond belief that although we had months to prepare for this conflict, months during which we knew that there was a high probability that we would be going to war, we put our young soldiers into harm's way without protecting them with the best vests, bulletproof vests, available to us.

There is a story that has been reported in the press of how one young soldier was on patrol, and he was shot by the enemy four times, twice in the chest and twice in his arms, and he survived. He survived because, although he did not have one of these Interceptor vests to wear, before he went on patrol one of his buddies took off his vest and gave it to him. It was only because he had this Interceptor vest on that he survived being shot in the chest.

But tonight, as we are here in Washington, DC, and those of us who are Members of this Chamber feel safe and secure within the confines of this House Chamber, there are young Americans who are in Baghdad and Tikrit and other parts of Iraq, some 44,000, we believe, who do not have the Interceptor vest. They have Vietnam-era

flak jackets basically, jackets that are incapable of stopping the bullets. I wrote Secretary Rumsfeld, and I asked him some questions which I think I and the American people deserve to have answered. Why were our soldiers not provided with these vests at the very beginning of this war? We had plenty of time to prepare to have these vests manufactured. Why were they sent into harm's way? How many American soldiers have lost their lives? How many have been terribly wounded and injured because of the insensitivity or incompetence or outright shameful behavior of those who decided that for some reason our soldiers did not need or did not deserve this kind of protection? I think the Secretary should answer that question to this Congress and to the American people. It is just almost beyond belief with all the billions of dollars available to the Pentagon that this most basic protection for our soldiers, the vests, the body armor they wear, would not be given to them. General Meyers said, well, it's not a question of money, it's a question of production. We're trying to get as many of these vests produced as possible. In fact, the Pentagon has even enlisted three additional companies to produce these vests. Well, it is about time.

Back in Ohio we have an old saying, it does no good to close the barn door after the horse has left the barn. Why were these protective devices not available before our soldiers were sent into battle? General Abizaid, testifying before a Senate committee, said he did not have an answer to that question. He said, I cannot answer why we went into conflict with an insufficient supply of these vests.

Somebody ought to take responsibility. The President frequently talks about the need for personal responsibility. Who was responsible at the Pentagon, in our defense establishment, for this gross oversight? I think the Secretary owes the American people an answer, and I hope he responds to my letter in an expeditious and prompt manner.

AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FOR SENIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Madam Speaker, I have come to the well of this House many times in the evening and in the day to talk about the high cost of prescription drugs and how much Americans pay for drugs relative to the rest of the industrialized world. I believe it is a crime, and I believe it is shame on us. I always say it is not shame on the pharmaceutical companies, it is shame on us, because the FDA and the Justice Department work for us. I have been regularly vocal and very critical of our FDA and what they have done in terms of, quote, protecting the public health. I have repeatedly said that a drug you